



Committee on Homeland Security

Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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Ranking Member Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) Welcomes Subcommittee Hearing on Agroterrorism

"More Must Be Done to Protect the Nation's Food Supply from the Field to the Fork"

WASHINGTON--Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, welcomed today's Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment hearing to assess agroterrorism and its potential risk to the U.S. agriculture industry.

In the two-part hearing entitled "Evaluating the Threat of Agroterrorism" Members heard testimony from the intelligence community about specific threats terrorists pose to our agriculture production and food supply. The U.S. agriculture sector is responsible for one out of every six jobs in the United States and supplies vast amounts of food to other parts of the world.

"As a Congressman from Mississippi, it gravely disturbs me that it is taking so long to look at ways to ensure our food supply chain is adequately protected from a domestic terrorist attack," Rep. Thompson said. "My state produces 70 percent to 80 percent of the nation's catfish. It is the third largest producer of cotton, soybean and rice in the nation. I know from my neighbors and friends at home that not enough is being done to protect the nation's food supply from the field to the fork."

"This Administration simply has chosen the wrong priorities when deciding what to do with regard to food security. I know all too well that local and state agricultural agencies are not equipped with the essential tools they need to counter an attack on our livestock or fields. We must set things right and make securing our nation's food supply a priority. It is imperative that we do all we can to assure the American people that we are doing everything possible to protect them from an agroterrorism attack."

The United States' food supply is widely seen as a target of opportunity by terrorists groups. A March 2005 Government Accountability Office report notes that while some progress had been made, fundamental channels of communication and coordination has yet to be established in attempting to prevent an agroterror attack. Last December, Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson noted, "For the life of me, I cannot understand why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply because it is so easy to do. We are importing a lot of food from the Middle East, and it would be easy to tamper with that."

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